



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Tuesday, 28 November 2006

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE: DEATH OF MR RG AKERS MP

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.40 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this State by the late Robert George Akers, a former Member of the Parliament of Queensland.
2. That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the Members of the Parliament of Queensland, in the loss they have sustained.

Robert George Akers, better known as Rob Akers, was born in Brisbane on 17 October 1941 and educated at Strathpine State School and Brisbane Grammar School, later completing a Bachelor of Architecture at the University of Queensland. From 1963 to 1969, Mr Akers worked as a student and architect for the Queensland Department of Works. He also worked as an architect with Conrad, Gargett and Partners from 1967 to 1970, and ran his own architecture practice from 1970 to 1973 before becoming a councillor for the Pine Rivers shire until 1978.

He was elected as the member for Pine Rivers in 1974, which was one of those bloodbath years for the Labor Party, Mr Speaker, as you may recall. Mr Akers's first speech focused on the lack of community facilities in the Pine Rivers electorate. He also spoke about architectural issues and fire-fighting equipment within school grounds.

Mr Akers married fellow parliamentarian Rosemary Kyburz. That was the first time that sitting members had married. Maybe they have begun a tradition, who knows. Due to Mr Akers's understanding of the workings of the Queensland Department of Works, he became a member of the department's Works and Housing Committee. Mr Akers also became deputy chairman of the Pine Rivers shire from 1976 until 1978 and later became the shire chairman until 1994.

Robert Akers was a member of various sporting and community organisations and was honoured by the Pine Rivers shire which named the Rob Akers Reserve after him. Mr Akers was a recipient of the 2001 Centenary Medal for distinguished service to the community through parliament, local government and the Lions Club. A funeral service for Robert Akers was held at the Lions Hall in Lawnton on 3 November 2006.

Those of us who were around in the 1970s and 1980s, which includes you, Mr Speaker, and some members of this House will recall Rob Akers and Rosemary Kyburz. They were, if you like, the firebrands in the Liberal Party at that time. They were not the only ones. There was a bit of a ginger group around. Many will recall that they stood up and had the courage to take on the then dominant National Party. Out of that there were all sorts of fireworks from time to time.

In those days the Liberal Party did not always agree with the National Party. We know things have changed since then, of course. In those days they had their differences. Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who was the Premier at the time, did not have a very high regard for some sections of the Liberal Party. But anyone who lived through that time would know that it was a very fiery time.

Rob Akers was well regarded by both sides of politics, as was Rosemary Kyburz, for having the courage to stand up for matters of principle and conviction. It would be remiss of me on an occasion like

this not to acknowledge that. Let us forget about the sensitivities that may have existed then and now. It would be wrong of me not to acknowledge that.

As I said earlier, Rob Akers was a person of courage, he was a person of principle and he was a person of conviction—as was Rosemary Kyburz. I was very active in the Labor Party in the 1970s and early 1980s as the party secretary. I was one of the many people who had a lot of respect for their courage. It was not easy; it was a difficult time. Rob Akers will be well remembered as someone of courage, principle and conviction. He was one of those people who is regarded as a little bit more than just an ordinary politician because he certainly was not. I take this opportunity to extend my sympathy and that of this House to his wife, Rosemary, and to their children.